

R 271152Z MAY 09
FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4207
INFO WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC
SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
DIA WASHINGTON DC
CIA WASHINGTON DC
DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
FRG COLLECTIVE
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USNATO
USMISSION USOSCE
HQ USAFE RAMSTEIN AB GE
HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE//J5 DIRECTORATE (MC)//
CDRUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GE
UDITDUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GE

UNCLAS BERLIN 000637

STATE FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/PAPD, EUR/PPA, EUR/CE, INR/EUC, INR/P,
SECDEF FOR USDP/ISA/DSAA, DIA FOR DC-4A

VIENNA FOR CSBM, CSCE, PAA

"PERISHABLE INFORMATION -- DO NOT SERVICE"

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [GM](#) [KN](#) [US](#) [IS](#) [XF](#) [FR](#) [AE](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: NORTH KOREA, SUPREME COURT, MIDEAST,
CLIMATE, FRANCE

- [¶1.](#) Lead Stories Summary
- [¶2.](#) North Korean Nuclear Threat
- [¶3.](#) Supreme Court Nomination
- [¶4.](#) Israeli Settlements
- [¶5.](#) Climate Protection
- [¶6.](#) New French Base in UAE

[¶1.](#) Lead Stories Summary

Early evening newscasts ZDF-TV's Heute and ARD-TV's Tagesschau opened with stories on the German government's upcoming decision on carmaker Opel. Newspapers led with diverse stories, including the government's further economic plans (Sueddeutsche), the "severe dispute about living wills" (FAZ), and the latest PISA study (Die Welt). Editorials focused on the authority that deals with the former East German intelligence service and the debate about living wills.

[¶2.](#) North Korean Nuclear Threat

Norddeutscher Rundfunk radio of Hamburg commented: "Once again a small country was not taken seriously and was only pushed back and forth on the chessboard of the geo-political interests of the major powers. Moscow and Beijing have been easy on Pyongyang in order to prevent the reunification of the two Koreas and have slowed down UN attempts to achieve this goal. At the same time, the world can't make the U.S. position out. The non-members of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, India and Israel, both of which have hundreds of nuclear warheads, are even supported in their efforts. They have not ratified the comprehensive ban on nuclear weapons tests from the 1990s and this does not jibe with condemnation of North Korea. The fiasco in the Far East could offer an opportunity for Barack Obama's plan of a nuclear-free world to take shape. Let's now start with the preparatory work. By the way, Germany and other non-owners of nuclear weapons are not falling by the wayside. Especially as signatories of the NPT, they are the guarantors for credibility and could pursue a course counter [to other country's interests] and could use this opportunity to convince Tehran, too, [to give up its nuclear program]."

Under the headline: "The Desperate Dictator," Sueddeutsche Zeitung judged: "No one should be afraid of North Korea. Irrespective of

the justified outrage in South Korea and Japan, it is highly likely that the regime will not use its weapons against its neighbors, because this would be suicidal. North Korea is not striving for regional hegemony either. The regime concentrates on itself and will not get in China's way. Why then these bomb tests? The detonation on Monday reflects the hobby of a dictator who suffers from a lack of attention. His logic works the other way round. North Korea is so weak that it stabilizes itself with its saber rattling. Kim Jong-il uses the bomb as his life insurance. And since his political life has obviously passed its zenith he needs the detonation all the more to safeguard his power and to control the change to a successor."

Frankfurter Allgemeine judged: "North Korea has nothing that could give it international significance, apart from its nuclear threatening potential towards neighboring states such as South Korea or Japan and the export of missile technology to regimes which we would not like to see to have such weapons. That is why we cannot expect Kim Jong-il to listen to the UN Security Council, or to take U.S. admonitions and threats more seriously than before. President Obama will have to make up his mind whether he should again get involved in a game which embarrassed his predecessors Bush and Clinton before. The whole world agrees that the key to the North Korea problem lies in China because Beijing keeps Kim's regime economically alive."

Regional daily Frdnkischer Tag of Bamberg argued: "The problem for the rest of the world always comes up when the isolated regime in Pyongyang bares its teeth. What to do with a regime that does not show any consideration for anything? What should be done if all diplomatic means fail? For instance, what effect do economic sanctions have on a regime that keeps its own people in a state of permanent captivity? And what can be done against a man who could run amok with nuclear weapons and who could open hell shortly before his own fall?"

Lausitzer Rundschau of Cottbus has this to say: "Thus far, Kim Jong-il has relied primarily on the Chinese leadership, which has considered Kim the lesser evil and had little interest in a development that could end with a reunification of the country. But even Beijing is slowly realizing that the North Korean regime is turning into an increasing risk.... North Korea's plutonium can become a fatal danger for anyone and any time. That is why fears from Washington are justified."

Regional daily Der Neue Tag noted: "Even Russia and China, which support the Stalinist leadership in Pyongyang in order to preserve an alleged balance with the South on the Korean peninsula, must now realize what kind of unpredictable partner they have nurtured?.. It is heavily armed with conventional weapons and has one million people under weapons and is now planning a missile and nuclear weapons technology. Kim Jong-il's clan is investing all its means into the military, while it is harassing its own people."

13. Supreme Court Nomination

Sueddeutsche Zeitung headlined: "Obama Nominates Supreme Court Justice - First Woman with Latin American Background on Supreme Court," and reported: "On Tuesday, President Obama nominated Sonia Sotomayor as a justice for the Supreme Court. The woman, who is considered a moderate left-winger, would be the first justice with a Latin American background if confirmed by the Senate. Sotomayor's nomination is no surprise. Currently a judge on the Appeals Court in New York, she was considered to be one of the favorites among the four remaining candidates. As far as politics is concerned, Obama's decision is primarily seen as a bow to the growing influence of the Hispanic minority in the United States. They had massively voted for the Democrats during the past presidential elections."

Under the headline: "Obama Wants to Set the Tone of Supreme Court," Handelsblatt reported: "The two camps in the Supreme Court were almost equally strong, because outgoing Justice David Souter frequently voted for the positions of the Democrats [on the court]. With Sotomayor, the Democrats now have for the first time in 15 years the chance of setting the tone and strengthening their privilege of interpretation. In the coming years, the Supreme Court is likely to deal with economic questions in addition to controversial issues such as Guantnamo. Against the background of

her previous rulings, economic circles have a skeptical view of Sotomayor. In view of her biography and her young age, she personifies the change that has been demanded for the court, which has long been derided as the 'club of white men.'"

Tagesspiegel profiled Sotomayor and wrote: "President Obama's nomination of Sonia Sotomayor is a decision that is typical of Obama. She looks progressive; he nominates a woman, the third in the history of the Supreme Court; it is also historic that Sotomayor would be the first Latino representative on the Supreme Court. His proposal is also conventional enough to gain the necessary approval in the Senate."

Berliner Zeitung headlined on its front page: "Hispanic American to become Supreme Court Judge" and notes that "the lawyer would be the first member of Hispanic origin on the U.S. Supreme Court... Since the Democrats have the majority in Congress, her approval seems to be clear. Apart from Ruth Ginsburg, she would be the second woman among the nine judges. The 54-year-old is believed to be relatively liberal." A longer report inside the paper states: "Obama is aware of her appointment's historic dimension.... Obama is getting the opportunity to strengthen the liberal wing of the Supreme Court."

14. Israeli Settlements

Sueddeutsche headlined "Israel seeks U.S. approval of settlement buildings" and said in its intro: "The new Israeli government under Prime Minister Netanyahu plans to reach a compromise with the U.S. government in the dispute over the 120 Jewish settlements in the West Bank and the 100 illegal outposts.... To persuade the U.S. to take a tougher approach on Tehran, Netanyahu seems to believe that it is necessary to reach a compromise on the outposts." The paper concludes: "The Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories are seen as key obstacles to progress in the Mideast peace process."

Tagesspiegel headlined: "Israel: Fewer Settlements if U.S. Takes Action against Iran" and added: "Israel wants to offer the U.S. a deal on the Jewish settlements in the West Bank. The government will remove dozens of illegal outposts if Washington allows Israel in return to extend its settlements in the West Bank. Defense Minister Barak wants to formally make this proposal during his visit to the U.S. next week.... Netanyahu hopes that Israel's concessions on the settlement issue will lead to a tougher American policy on Tehran."

Frankfurter Allgemeine carried a short report under the headline "Lieberman Praises the Roadmap," noting that "Israeli Foreign Minister Lieberman committed himself to the international Mideast peace plan, while Prime Minister Netanyahu still refused to approve the two-state solution described in the roadmap."

15. Climate Protection

Two German papers carry short reports on the "unsuccessful" climate change meeting in Paris.

Sueddeutsche headlined "Unsuccessful Climate Meeting" and reported that "the preparations for a new global climate agreement are not making any progress. The 16 largest greenhouse gas emitters could not reach an agreement during their meeting in Paris... Germany's representative, Environment Minister Gabriel expressed dissatisfaction, saying that the Europeans are still going it alone."

FT Deutschland headlined: "Climate divides industrial and threshold countries," adding: "There has been no rapprochement between the most important participants in the UN climate summit at the end of the year in Copenhagen. The 16 largest industrial and threshold countries could not agree on a common line during their preparatory talks yesterday. German Environment Minister Gabriel said: 'No real progress has been made between developing and industrial countries.'"

16. New French Base in UAE

According to Sueddeutsche Zeitung, "the French engagement with a base on the Persian Gulf is not without risk and it is no coincidence that it was Nicolas Sarkozy who convinced the sheikhs to

allow French soldiers to enter their country. For the monsieur from the Elyse Palace, the new base in Abu Dhabi means an important extension of the French sphere of influence for the first time into an area that was not part of the former French colonies. In view of the French reintegration into NATO, it was only logical that the president added his own forces to the presence of the Anglo Saxons. As far as strategy is concerned, the base in Abu Dhabi is optimal. From here, the French are close enough to the potential and real trouble spots in the world. But the most important aspect is the proximity to Iran. Iran is not only threatening Israel, but the emirs are careful not even to mention this. For them, Iran with its hegemonic claims is a threat. That is why the French are welcome for a variety of reasons. Sarkozy will save the costs for the deployment in the UAE in Africa, where he cannot gain too much anyway."

die tageszeitung commented: "If military bases made the world safer, peace would exist everywhere in the world. Instead, the experience with the U.S., Soviet, French, and other bases abroad made clear that the main issue is the defense of national interests. The new French base in the UAE is no exception to the rule.... With his base, Nicolas Sarkozy also wants to demonstrate that he is considering remaining a medium power as far as military and political aspects are concerned: at eye level with the U.S. and China, the essential military powers in the future. For this positioning, Sarkozy has returned to NATO. Ex-President Chirac said 'non' to the Iraq war, thus creating new diplomatic credibility for France in the world. But a comparable signal cannot be expected from a future conflict constellation. Sarkozy is pinning his hope on military strength. He has now brought France to the front line in one of the most unstable regions in the world."

KOENIG